

Soda consumption, screen time, team sports at school influence students' weight

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Soda consumption, TV and video/computer games, and the frequency of meals heavily influenced students' weight in an Indiana University study that examined the impact of a school-based obesity intervention program over an 18-month period.

More [soda consumption](#) and screen time meant students were more likely to be overweight or to [gain weight](#). The more frequently students ate meals each day, the less likely they were to stay overweight or gain weight during the study, which examined the Healthy, Energetic, Ready, Outstanding, Enthusiastic Schools program.

Dong-Chul Seo, associate professor in the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington, said participation in team sports also contributed to students' ability to achieve a healthy weight.

"Schools and families may be able to successfully focus on these modifiable risk factors, decreasing the burden of [childhood obesity](#)," he said.

HEROES, implemented by schools in southern Indiana, northwestern Kentucky and southeastern Illinois, is sponsored by the Welborn Baptist Foundation and based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Model. HEROES is intended to enhance schoolwide wellness culture through changes in physical education, nutrition, the physical environment, health promotion efforts for school staff and family, and community involvement. Researchers

from IU's School of Public Health-Bloomington and the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community have been evaluating the HEROES initiative for the past four years.

"Predictors for Persistent Overweight, Deteriorated Weight and Improved Weight Status During 18 Months in a School-Based Longitudinal Cohort" involved 5,309 students at 11 schools.

Seo said the findings confirm the connection between higher levels of soda consumption and persistent overweight and deteriorating weight status, and they support the recent and controversial New York City ban on sales of supersized soda and other sweetened beverages.

The finding about the relationship between the number of meals students eat daily and their weight contributes to a scant amount of evidence in this area.

"Thus, encouraging students to maintain a regular meal pattern with at least three meals a day appears to be a good strategy to help students achieve healthy weight," Seo said.

The research found that the overall socio-economic status of a school had an impact on students. Those attending schools with lower socio-economic status were more likely to be overweight or to gain weight during the study period. This could reflect the greater opportunities students have for nutritious food offerings and physical activity at schools with high socio-economic status, Seo said, or it could reflect peer influence.

Seo will discuss this study with Mindy King at 6:15 p.m. EDT Tuesday, Oct. 30. Co-authors are King and Danielle Neukam, with the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at IU; Nayoung Kim, IU School of Public Health-Bloomington; and Rhonda Meade, Welborn Baptist

Foundation.

Provided by Indiana University

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